



Islamic Online University

Explanation of the Six Pillars of Faith

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Notes based on Sharh Usool Al-Emaan by Shaykh
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Module 4

Third: Belief in Allah's Names and Sifaat (Attributes)

It means to affirm the Names and Attributes which Allah (ﷻ) affirmed to Himself in His Book and in the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ) in the way that best fits Him without:

1. **Tahreef** (distortion of the meaning),
2. **Ta'teel** (negating the meaning),
3. **Takyeef** (assigning a manner to any attribute), or
4. **Tamtheel** (drawing parallels to Allah ﷻ).

Allah (ﷻ) said:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

“And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them, and leave the company of those who belie or deny (or utter impious speech against) His Names. They will be requited for what they used to do.”¹

He (ﷻ) also said:

وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٧﴾

“His is the highest description (i.e. none has the right to be worshipped but He, and there is nothing comparable unto Him) in the heavens and in the earth. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.”²

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

“And there is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.”³

¹ Soorah Al-A'raf 7:180

² Soorah Ar-Rum 30:27

³ Soorah Ash-Shura 42:11

Two sects went astray regarding this matter:

The First Sect:

Al-Mu'atilah, who negated all or some of Allah's Names and Attributes claiming that affirming Allah's Names and Sifaat necessitates Tashbeeh (drawing similarities between Allah (ﷻ) and His creation)! This claim is surely false in many aspects, including:

First: It necessitates false obligations like contradiction in the words of Allah (ﷻ), far removed is He from every imperfection. This is so because Allah (ﷻ) affirmed the Names and Attributes to Himself and negated the likeness of anything unto Him. Had its affirmation necessitated the Tashbeeh, then it would imply contradiction in the Speech of Allah (ﷻ) and that its parts refute one another.

Second: It is not necessary that "agreement in Name"⁴ or "in an Attribute" between two things obligates likeness between them. Indeed you see two people in a state of agreement where each is a hearing, seeing, and speaking human. In no way does this necessitate likeness neither in the human values nor in the hearing, sight, and speech. You see that animals have hands, legs, and eyes. This kind of agreement does not necessitate that their hands, legs, and eyes are like each other. If this distinction in the agreement in Names and qualities amongst the created things is clear, then the distinction between the Creator and the created things is greater and more evident.

The Second Sect:

The Mushabbahah, who affirm Allah's Names and Attributes but make Tashbeeh (draw similarities) between Allah (ﷻ) and His Creation, claiming that this is what is necessitated by the meaning of the texts on the ground that Allah (ﷻ) addresses the 'Ibaad (mankind) according to their understanding! Such a claim is false in many respects, including:

First: The Mushabbahah: Likens Allah (ﷻ) to His creation which is a false concept that is negated by the Shar'a as well as reasoning. Thus it is impossible that a false matter is necessitated by the texts of the Qur'aan and Sunnah.

Second: Allah (ﷻ) addressed mankind according to their understanding of the basic meanings of His Name and Attributes. However, the knowledge of the essence and true nature of meanings regarding His Thaath (Essence) and Sifaat exclusively belongs to Allah (ﷻ) Alone. So, if Allah (ﷻ) affirms to Himself that He is All-Hearer, then the Hearing is known from the understanding of the basic meaning, which is the comprehension of voices. However, the essence of this meaning with respect to the Hearing of Allah (ﷻ) is unknown because the essence of hearing is distinct even amongst the created. Certainly,

⁴ There are many Names that are common between Allah (ﷻ) and His creatures. [Translator]

the distinction between the hearing of the created and that of the Creator is greater and more evident.

It is known that if Allah (ﷻ) mentioned about Himself that He Istawaa ‘ala Al-‘Arsh ⁵, then the Istiwaa’ according to the basic meaning is known (means : ascendance), however, the manner (the ‘how’) of His ascension above His ‘Arsh is unknown, because the essence of the Istiwaa’ amongst the creatures is distinct. The Istiwaa’ on a firmly stable chair is not the same as that on the saddle of an unyielding and easily-frightened camel. When this is distinct with respect to the creatures, then it is greater and more evident between the Creator and the creature.

The belief in Allah (ﷻ) according to what we have described above yields great benefits to the believers:

First: The true manifestation of the Tawheed of Allah (ﷻ) such that there is no attachment to other than Him in hope, fear, and worship.

Second: The perfect Love, Magnification and Exaltation of Allah (ﷻ) as obligated by His Most Beautiful Names and Sublime Attributes.

Third: Manifesting His worship by doing what He (ﷻ) commands and avoiding what He (ﷻ) forbade.

⁵ Istawaa ‘ala Al-‘Arsh: Ascended the Throne in the manner that suits His Majesty. [Translator]